



# Sighting of the Himalayan Trinket Snake, *Orthriophis hodgsonii* Günther (1860) (Reptilia: Colubridae), in Sahastra Dhara, Uttarakhand: A new elevational record

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**Abstract.**—In 2016, two individuals of *Orthriophis hodgsonii* (Himalayan Trinket Snake) were observed from the Sahastra Dhara area, Uttarakhand, India, confirming the occurrence of this species in the Garhwal region. This report provides the lowest elevational record (835 m) of *Orthriophis hodgsonii* from its previously known distribution range (1,000–3,200 m).

**Keywords.** Geographic distribution, north India, Garhwal region, range extension, Sauria, conservation

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Of the four species in the genus *Orthriophis* found across the world (*Orthriophis mollendorffi*, *O. taeniurus*, *O. hodgsonii*, and *O. cantoris*), three are found in India (*O. taeniurus*, *O. hodgsonii*, and *O. cantoris*) (Utiger et al. 2002; Whitaker and Captain 2004). The Himalayan Trinket Snake (*Orthriophis hodgsonii*) is native to India, Nepal, and China (Tibet) (Whitaker and Captain 2004). In India, this species is distributed in Jammu and Kashmir northern Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Northern, West Bengal Sikkim and Meghalaya, ranging from the elevation of 1,000–3,200 m (Smith 1943; Das 2002; Whitaker and Captain 2004; Sharma 2007).

On 1 April 2016 (11:10 hours), a Himalayan Trinket Snake (sex unknown) was recorded from a small barren plot, located close to human settlements in the Sahastra Dhara area near Dehradun (30°23'07.4"N, 78°07'40.5"E, 831.4 m; Fig. 1). The spot was near the protected forest of the Mussoorie Forest Division. Some of the plants in this area where the snakes were seen are: *Murraya koenigii* (Curry Tree), *Lantana camara* (Lantana), *Jatropha curcas* (Ban Arandi), and *Datura stramonium* (Jimson Weed). Both snakes (including the one recorded below) were photographed and visually identified based on descriptions given by Smith (1943), Sharma (2007), and Whitaker and Captain (2004). No scalation data was recorded. Thereafter, on 18 August 2016 (13:20 hours), an individual of unknown sex was observed far from

where the first specimen was recorded (30°23'05.5"N, 78°07'44.6"E, 839.4 m; Figs. 2 and 3). Both sightings were during the summer season and near the Sahastra Dhara.

Husain and Ray (1995) first recorded this species from Pauri, Chamoli, and Nainital districts of the Uttarakhand State. Thereafter, Whitaker and Captain (2004) recorded this species from Mussoorie, Almora, and Nainital districts of Uttarakhand State, at an elevation ranging from 1,000–3,200 m. Smith (1943), Sharma (2003) and Bahuguna (2010) also corroborated the presence of the Himalayan Trinket Snake in the State. Vasudevan and Sondhi (2010) had only included the Himalayan Trinket Snake in a checklist of snakes of Uttarakhand but no description and locality records were stated.

We herein confirm the occurrence of the Himalayan Trinket Snake in the Uttarakhand State, Garhwal region (Sahastra Dhara—a perennial river) and provide the first record of its presence below 1,000 m. The Sahastra Dhara is located in northern India at 29°26'–31°28'N and 77°49'–80°06'E and falls within the Himalaya Biogeographic Zone and located in the West Himalaya Province. The largest portion of this area is in the Shivalik's Biogeographic Subdivision, which constitutes an important repository of reptilian fauna.

The Himalayan Trinket Snake has not yet been assessed by the IUCN Red List. Increasing development

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Fig. 1. Himalayan Trinket Snake, *Orthriophis hodgsonii*, near Sahastra Dhara.



Fig. 2. Close-up of the head of a Himalayan Trinket Snake recorded from Sahastra Dhara.

and anthropogenic activities across the riparian corridors, shrinkage of natural water sources inside protected areas, expansion of the road network across a long chain of protected habitats, and lack of awareness among the local people were some of the observed threats that could potentially lead to population decline of the species.

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**Fig. 3.** Himalayan Trinket Snake in its natural habitat in the Sahastra Dhara area.

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